

March 19, 2019

Esteemed members of Planning & Development Committee,

I am writing in strong opposition to all sections pertaining to forced sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation in HB 7192, including 7 through 10, and in SB 874, including 1 through 4, and any other bill that proposes: i) the creation of a Commission for the purpose of studying the sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation of school services and school districts, ii) developing a plan for forced sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation of Connecticut Public Schools, iii) implementing forced sharing of services, regionalization or consolidation of public schools, iv) penalizing public schools for NOT regionalizing or sharing services; v) removing resources or services from our school district; or vi) removing or reducing local control over school districts.

Forced regionalization, of any size, is literally the death knell of this great state and attempts to thwart local control under the guise of fiscal responsibility. Connecticut's strength is its bedroom communities and our outstanding schools. Any erosion to the quality of education and your base of successful taxpayers will walk. The state really does not have vibrant cities and a growing economy that will attract professionals if we harm our performing school districts. This transcends party line – and these bills are the most catastrophic legislation to Connecticut's future. Forcing schools to regionalize would deprive parents and boards of education of that decision-making authority, and that is unacceptable. I'm sure you are aware that new residents to Connecticut earned only 55 percent of their departing counterparts' salaries on average. That will not help our profound budgetary and economic issues.

We chose Wilton predominantly for our young kids, given its great schools and friendly neighborhoods. My husband has often told me that moving to Wilton is the single best decision we have made in our life. However please understand that we have made sacrifices to get to where we are today. To hear that our sacrifices do not count is saddening, to say the very least. We have worked hard, made sacrifices, and made hard decisions to be here today.

I have not seen any evidence indicating that regionalizing school districts will save money given the costs of combining resources and added transportation costs. More importantly, I have not seen any evidence establishing that regionalization will maintain or improve the quality of education in school districts. Hartford, New Haven, and Stamford school districts had higher than average per pupil expenditures notwithstanding the largest enrollments in state (>15,000).

I am worried that regionalization or the lack of, or reduction in, local control will result in: i) larger enrollment in schools, ii) inadequate administrative support/supervision, iii) longer transportation times for children resulting in decreased engagement, lower academic scores, and increased absenteeism, iv) a decline in the quality of the education and academic outcomes, and v) reduced teacher and community engagement.

Please do not forcibly take away any town's ability to control their own children's educations. High quality education for our students is our first and most fundamental priority. I do not understand why Connecticut is intentionally sabotaging their best assets – our schools!

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony.

Sincerely,

Michelle Krupa  
Wilton, CT